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LETTER DATED 17 MAY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GHANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instruction from my Government, I have the honour to attach hereto as an annex the contents of a statement which the Government of Ghana issued to the diplomatic corps accredited to Ghana on 9 May 1996 bearing on the Liberian situation.

I should be grateful if you would have the contents circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jack B. WILMOT
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

96-13091 (E) 240596 250596

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Annex

Statement issued by the Government of Ghana on the ministerial meeting of the members of the Economic Community of West African States Committee of Nine on Liberia, held at Accra, on 7 and 8 May 1996

1. Two meetings were scheduled at Accra for the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Nine on Liberia: the ministerial meeting and the summit meeting. Members of the Committee of Nine are Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea and Senegal. Sierra Leone, Mali, Liberia and Niger were invited as observers. There was full attendance at the ministerial meeting and very far-reaching decisions were taken. The summit meeting could not come off since none of the heads of State of the Committee of Nine turned up.

2. Discussions centred on the breached Abuja Agreement and on the determination of the appropriate mechanism that would put the Liberian peace process back on track. The main objective of the meeting was to stop the current mayhem in Monrovia and restore that city to its safe haven status. Other issues were the strengthening of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to make it a deterrent force that could implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the ex-combatants into Liberian civil society. The state of the relationship between ECOMOG and the Liberian National Transitional Government, most particularly with the Council of State, was discussed at length. The status of forces agreement, the General Roosevelt Johnson affair, funding and supply of equipment and material by the international community to ECOMOG, the internal dynamics of ECOMOG itself and the possible pull-out of ECOMOG from Liberia were other issues that were similarly discussed.

3. On the question of the possible pull-out of ECOMOG from Liberia, the meeting took its cue from the ECOMOG Field Commander, who categorically stated that either ECOMOG should be given the strength and the wherewithal to carry out its mandate to the letter or ECOMOG should be withdrawn. There was a strong debate on this subject as to whether an appropriate presentation should be made to the summit meeting. It was agreed by all the participants, however, that every State member of ECOMOG had the sovereign right to pull its troops out of ECOMOG at any time.

4. The meeting finally agreed on the following mechanism which could test the sincerity of the Liberia warring factions in bringing back permanent and durable peace to their country:

(a) Monrovia

(i) The strict observance by the armed fighters of all parties of the cease-fire demanded by the Chairman of ECOWAS throughout Liberia;

(ii) The immediate withdrawal of armed fighters from Monrovia simultaneously with the completion of the deployment of ECOMOG throughout the city;

(iii) The removal of all arms and ammunition from Monrovia to be verified by ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), and the reinstatement of Monrovia to the status of a safe haven;

(iv) The return of looted properties to their rightful owners and ensuring the freedom of all citizens from arbitrary arrest and abduction by armed elements;

(v) The return of all arms seized from ECOMOG troops during the attack on them at Tubmanburg, Bomi County, in December 1995;

(vi) The return of vehicles and equipment seized or looted from UNOMIL, United Nations and other humanitarian agencies in Liberia;

(vii) The employment of the Cease-fire Violations Monitoring Committee to oversee the observance of the cease-fire;

(b) The Johnson issue

(i) Re-establishment of the authority and cohesiveness of the Council of State of Liberia in particular and the Liberian National Transitional Government in general as outlined in the Abuja Agreement and the other agreements preceding it;

(ii) Ensuring reconciliation in and inclusiveness of Government throughout the transitional period;

(iii) Respect and equal treatment of all ethnic groups in Liberia;

(iv) Issue of an appropriate statement by General Roosevelt Johnson indicating his satisfaction with and preparedness to work along the lines of the present mechanism for peace and stability in Liberia;

(v) The provision of safe conduct out of the Barclay Training Centre of armed elements of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J) and the Liberian Peace Council to agreed areas outside Monrovia and the immediate disarming of armed soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) at the Barclay Training Centre;

(c) Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

(i) Revitalization of plans for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration;

(ii) Immediate implementation of proportional disarmament among the various factions to correspond with the number of troops disarmed at the Barclay Training Centre;

(iii) Verifiable disarmament by all factions along with the creation of national armed forces with contribution of personnel from all factions;

(iv) Training of trainers of AFL;

(v) Implementation of plans for reintegrating former armed fighters into Liberian society;

(d) Democratization

(i) Creation of the necessary atmosphere for the restoration of democracy in the country by ensuring the reopening of newspapers and radio stations;

(ii) Necessary constitutional changes to allow for proportional representation in the formation of national government;

(iii) Arrangements for the early return to their homes or counties of refugees and internally displaced persons;

(iv) Resumption of political campaigns throughout the country in preparation for elections;

(v) Ensuring of necessary institutional preparations for the holding and monitoring of free and fair elections throughout Liberia.

5. The Ministers reiterated that the mechanism outlined above for implementation by the Government and people of Liberia would be closely monitored by the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia to assess the commitment of Liberians to the peace process and also to determine at the next ECOWAS summit meeting in late July and early August 1996 the continuation or otherwise of the involvement of ECOWAS in the Liberian peace process.

6. On the issue of the "collective presidency" vis-à-vis the Abuja concept of the executive, the Ministers expressed the view that the collective presidency concept was external to the Abuja Agreement.

7. Concerning the nature of political cooperation between ECOMOG and the Council of State, the Ministers decided to defer to the next summit of ECOWAS, the decision to direct the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS to sign the revised draft of the agreement relating to the status of ECOMOG in Liberia between ECOWAS and the Republic of Liberia as initialled. They stressed that the cooperation between ECOMOG and the Council of State of the Republic of Liberia under the status of forces agreement was symbiotic in nature and that under no circumstances should the agreement be interpreted to mean that the operations of ECOMOG, the Special Representative, the Field Commander or any member of ECOMOG should be under the control of the Government of Liberia.

8. The Ministers critically considered the events that triggered the recent crisis in Monrovia and concluded that they revolved around General Roosevelt D. Johnson. They welcomed the decision by Ghana and Nigeria to provide temporary residence to General Johnson in order to lessen the tension in Monrovia. In the spirit of reconciliation they appealed to the Council of State to grant General Johnson amnesty from arrest and prosecution. They also recommended that General Johnson should be reinstated to his former position and

strongly urged General Johnson to respect the authority of the Council of State under the Abuja Agreement.

9. The Ministers recognized that, as presently constituted, ECOMOG could not adequately discharge the political and military duties it was called upon to play in the continued search for peace in Liberia. Therefore they welcomed the current efforts being made by the international community, especially through the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) to explore ways of lending diplomatic, political, military and other forms of support and assistance to ECOMOG. They also called for all international pledges made at the 1995 United Nations Conference Liberia in New York to be redeemed. They expressed appreciation to the Government of the United States of America for the offer of US$ 30 million to ECOMOG to make it operationally effective and to the Governments of Belgium and Denmark for their offers of sponsorship aimed at expanding ECOMOG and appealed to all African and other States to make appropriate contributions towards the search for peace in Liberia.